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were fired at us from the bank, though our boatmen and escort were uncertain whether they came from brigands or from soldiers signalling us to stop; the river being wide, however, and the current swift we did not trouble to enquire. In many places when tied up to the north bank we found the ground pitted with small holes, the work of the liquorice root diggers. This is an old industry which has revived considerably of late owing to a foreign firm commencing to buy the produce for export. The liquorice-producing areas in the world appear to be limited in extent, and this is one of them. Twenty-four hours above Paot'ou the Wula Shan mountains are reached, a bare rocky range running a little inland along the north side of the river, and a prominent landmark from afar. In this neighbourhood the Ordos bank, hitherto uninhabited desert, begins to be populated, and Mongols and Chinese are to be seen with many camels, sheep, and ponies grazing on poor-looking downs. As Paot'ou is approached farms and villages become numerous on the north bank, and the plain between river and mountains is a vast corn-field.

Paot'ou Chen (also known as Hsi Paot'ou) is a large walled town lying a little way back from the Yellow River in the corn-growing plain which slopes up towards the Tach'ing Shan, a continuation of the Wula Shan. It is remarkable in many respects; in the first place it is essentially a new and growing place, unlike the dilapidated and hoary old towns of Kansu, and is the centre of a fertile corn-growing area which a generation ago was unoccupied except by a few Mongols and their flocks. There is probably plenty more good land waiting to be opened up further west, north of the Yellow River, and the curious spectacle may here be witnessed of the Chinese colonising Canadian-like prairies within the borders of their own republic. Secondly, as well as being a cleaning and repacking centre for the Tientsin wool trade like Shihchu Shan, it is evidently a commercial centre of considerable and increasing importance for the import and export trade of the vast hinterland to the west. We found more evidence of trade activity in this isolated town than in any city in Kansu. Unfortunately, situated as it is on the very outskirts of Chinese civilization, Paot'ou appears to have suffered greatly from the prevailing